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Freighter *Mesabi Miner* is first vessel through as Soo Locks open for 2012 shipping season

DETROIT – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, announces the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., opened Saturday, March 24, marking the beginning of the Great Lakes shipping season.

With about 60 spectators watching from the observation deck, the downbound *Mesabi Miner*, a 1,004-foot freighter loaded with 57,152 tons of coal, was the first ship to enter the Poe Lock at 12:18 p.m., said Chris Albrough, lockmaster. It was followed by the 768-foot *John G. Munson*. The Soo Locks opened 12 hours earlier than originally scheduled this year at the request of the shipping industry because minimal ice conditions in the Great Lakes due to a mild winter enabled vessels to arrive at the Soo well ahead of schedule.

Since Jan. 19, the locks were closed and underwent repairs and maintenance during the winter shutdown.

“Maintaining and operating the Soo Locks is one of the most important responsibilities of the Detroit District,” said Lt. Col. Mike Derosier, district engineer. “The locks are the linchpin of the Great Lakes navigation system, integral in fostering commerce that benefits our nation. I want to thank the many Soo Area Office employees who diligently performed their duties during the winter months, preparing the locks for another busy shipping season.”

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, maintains a navigation system that includes 94 harbors and the Great Lakes Connecting Channels that join lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Erie.

For more details, contact Lynn Rose, Detroit District public affairs officer, 313-226-4680; or Kevin Sprague, area engineer at the Corps’ Soo Area Office, 906-635-3464.

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To see the *Mesabi Miner*, visit our Flickr site: http://www.flickr.com/photos/detroit_district/

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